

## A weekend away in sherry country

22 Apr 2008 by JR

Last week I spent a couple of days renewing my acquaintance with Jerez and visiting Montilla for the first time prior to the [Wine Creators event in Ronda](#), on which I will be reporting a week on Saturday. What a wonderful part of the world this is – and almost three hours' flying time due south of Britain so distinctly warmer temperatures are virtually guaranteed. (Driving rain accompanied them in Ronda but that is another story.)

Many Brits spend a fortune on smart places in Marrakesh to escape the British winter but Andalucia is almost as far south and of course rich in Moorish influence – with very much better wine.

It was wandering round the modest whitewashed fishing village of Sanlúcar de Barrameda (right) that made me realise what a great weekend Brits could have here, provided they could live with their consciences for using up airmiles. It was sherry expert and professor of criminology Jesús Barquin who guided me and David Schildknecht on his first visit ever to Spain. He spends every December here with his family so knows every nook and cranny, including the wonderfully downmarket Bar Navarro that serves beautifully fresh fish in a back street. The classic Sanlúcar activity is to visit the fish restaurants on the quay looking across the river Guadalquivir to the famous Doñana nature reserve but the Bar Navarro seems like a tourist-free zone. You sit on assorted plastic chairs, order at the bar and go and collect your food when the distinctly un-oleaginous patron bellows from the bar that it's ready. You can imagine that this is not the most expensive meal in the world. There's also a hugely atmospheric hotel in the historic Palacio Duques de Medina Sidonia, set in a subtropical garden overlooking the market.



Jerez, 20 minutes' drive away, is a much more sophisticated city and probably worth being based in. We stayed at the hip, very well situated Hotel Palacio Garvey, which has a talented young Adria-trained chef currently installed in its Condesa restaurant. There are bodegas aplenty to visit and some of the most exciting wines I have tasted in a while – sherries of widely varying styles, most of them underpriced. A great place to visit would be Bodegas Tradicion, which has some particularly refined old sherries (though no finos, alas) and a leading collection of Spanish art to boot.

Ryanair have well-timed flights to Jerez from 'London, Stansted' (as they call this large Essex airfield) late on Friday afternoons and back on Sunday night. What are you waiting for?

**Bar Navarro**, on the corner of a Sanlúcar backstreet, not too far from...

**Hospederia Duques de Medina Sidonia** tel +39 956 36 01 61

**Hotel SFR Palacio Garvey**, Jerez tel +39 956 32 67 00 [www.sferahoteles.com](http://www.sferahoteles.com)  
**Bodegas Tradicion**, Jerez [www.bodegatradicion.com](http://www.bodegatradicion.com)